

Sweet Sixteen

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Category: Scarecrow and Mrs. King

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2000-05-29 09:00:00

Updated: 2000-05-29 09:00:00

Packaged: 2016-04-27 18:54:14

Rating: K

Chapters: 1

Words: 6,343

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: Lee has to deal the his daughters first date, and Amanda has to deal with Lee when their daughter goes out on her first date.

## Sweet Sixteen

"Mom! Mom! Where are you? Mom!" Cassie shouted as she ran in to the back door.

> The kitchen was empty, so she knew her mother was in the study. She was always in<br> there. She hated that so much because everything was so secret. It had always been that

> way. <br> Just as she knocked, Amanda opened the door to the study. " Sweetheart, I'm in here.

> What's wrong?"<br> "Oh, mom! Nothing. Everything is great! You are not going to believe what's

> happened! Well, I guess you could if you really thought about it. I mean, it could happen<br> and It did and it happened to me..." Cassie started. Amanda rolled her eyes. How Lee

> had teased her about Cassie's inherited way of getting to the point.<br> "Cassandra, Sweetheart. Slow down. What are you talking about?" Amand asked,

> inviting Cassie in to sit down.<br> "Mom, He asked me. ME! Zach Bauer asked me out! He is the cutest kid in school.

> He's not the most popular, but he's best friends with the most popular guy so that makes<br> him petty close. Oh, Kenzy swore he liked Marianne but he asked me. Oh, Marianne has

> had a crush on him since 7th grade and she was so upset when she found out. She said he<br> war crazy for asking me but guess what? He asked me! Me!" Cassie got up, twirled

> around the couch a couple of times, and then tripped over her dad's desk, bringing to her<br> mind her father. Her face calmed down, almost sad looking.

> "Cassie, that's great. I'm very happy for you... What's wrong now?" Amanda asked<br> as Cassie sat at her father's desk.

> "What about Dad? He's gonna come unglued! Remember how he was when I had my<br> first sleep over. I was the only girl there who had to check in every two hours. It was so

> embarrassing." Cassie moped.<br> "Your dad is just concerned about you."

> "Yea, but mom, the video camera hidden the tent was a bit much, don't you think? <br> Yea, I found it the next morning. Besides, Kenzy swore she saw Dad's car circle the block

> 5 times. He is so afraid to let me do anything. You'd almost think I was on probation and<br> Dad was the officer in charge. Could you tell him about the date for me? He will listen to

> you. No one can handle him the way you can,. Please! Here I am, sixteen, and I've never <br> been on a date in my life. Kenzy has already had two boyfriends and I really like this guy.

> Please, mom?" Cassie asked, trying very hard to convince her mom to do the "dirty<br> deed".

> "Cassie, you know I love you, but you need to do this yourself. I'm sure he will be<br> fine." Amanda said. Cassie grimaced and Amanda smiled. She knew Lee would have a

> hard time with his daughter's first date, but once he got used to the idea, he would be fine.<br>

> <br>

> After the dinner dishes were done, Amanda sat down at the table to help little Harry<br> with his homework. Cassie was unusually quiet. She had done her biology and was

> rubbing her hands, trying to come up with some way to bring up her concerns with her<br> dad. When Lee sat down, Cassie sat herself on his lap, and put her arms around his neck,

> the way she used to do when she was a little girl.<br> "How was work, Daddy?" Cassie asked as innocent as she possibly could. Lee looked

> over at Amanda, who buried her face in Harry's homework, suppressing a smile.<br> "It was okay... What's going on? Did something happen that I should know about?"

> Lee asked, looking up at Cassie, then over to Amanda. He was getting that feeling of<br> being set up..

> "Everything is just fine, Daddy. I just wanted to know how your day went."<br> "You only call me Daddy when you want something or you're in trouble."

> "Well, I'm not in trouble. Actually, it is just the opposite. A guy at school asked me<br> out on a date. Isn't that great?" Cassie said, as she quickly got off his lap, and headed to

> the kitchen to get a glass of water. Lee looked up, looking concerned. He looked over at<br> Amanda for guidance, and she just smiled and went back to helping Harry.

> "A...A Date? Don't you think you are a little too young for that? I mean, you should<br> wait for at least two more years before you start doing anything like that." Lee said,

> getting up and standing by the counter. <br> "Dad, I'll be going to college before that. Besides, you said I had to wait til I was

> sixteen two years ago and now I'm 16. We were just going to go to the movies on Friday.<br> There is no reason to worry. Oh, Dad. He is a very nice guy. He comes from a great

> family and I just know you will like him. In fact, he reminds me a lot of you." Cassie<br> said, quickly going upstairs to end the discussion. Lee looked over at Amanda, Amanda

> shot him an amused look when she saw the stressed look on his face. He turned and went<br> to the bottom of the stairs

> "Hey, wait a minute. We're not done yet! Get down here!" Lee yelled up the stairs. <br> Cassie slowly came down the stairs.

> "Dad, his name is Zach Bauer. He lives about 5 blocks from here. In fact, he lives on<br> Grandma's street. She probably knows him. Please, can I go? It's this Friday and we are

> just going to the movies. I promise I will be home by midnight and there is nothing to  
<br>worry about.. Let me go. I really want to. Please, Daddy?" Cassie said, as she put her  
> arms around Lee's neck. <br>Lee sighed in defeat. "I guess so. But I want to meet this guy. No one is about to go  
> out with my daughter until I meet him. " Cassie squealed, kissed Lee on the cheek, and<br>headed up to her room. "Nothing to worry about,...Yea...right!" Lee looked very  
> discouraged and the muscle in his cheek started contracting. Amanda knew he was having<br>a hard time with this. Harry, listening the whole time, whispered to his mom, "I don't envy  
> Zach." <br>Amanda smiled. "Oh, just finish your homework." She got up and went over to Lee.  
> "Are you okay?" Amanda asked, putting her arms around her husband. Lee looked at<br>her and then back up the stairs. "The boys were so much easier."  
> <br>The next morning, Amanda sat in the Q-bureau. Ever since they integrated the  
> computer with the one at home she only needed to come into the office two days a week. <br>That was the arrangement her and Lee came up with when Cassie came along. Lee was so  
> excited when he found out they were having a baby. He was adamant about her staying<br>out of danger, though. He still carried a few scars from losing both parents when he was  
> so young. He was not going to let the same thing happen to his kids. He didn't worry so<br>much about Philip or Jamie anymore because they were out on their own now, although  
> Jamie comes home during school break.. Amanda was so proud of her children, although<br>it seemed she had two different families at times. Jamie was in medical school and he was  
> busy all the time. Philip was working as an engineer. He had been married for about one<br>year and Stacey, his wife, was wonderful. Harry, 'the surprise', was born four years after  
> Cassie. He had his older brothers eating out of his hand.. And then there was Cassie. <br>She was the apple of Lee's eye. He was smitten with her the moment he laid eyes on her.  
> She had turned into quite a young lady. She was slender like her mom, but she had her<br>father's dark blond hair and coloring. But mostly, she had his yen for adventure. That is  
> what scared Lee the most. He had grown up around men and he didn't know much about<br>young girls. He seemed to do everything wrong when it came to Cassie. He was too  
> overprotective. Amanda tried to get him to let up, but it was fruitless.<br>"Amanda... Amanda!" Amanda was startled by Francine, who was standing by her  
> desk.<br>"Oh, I'm sorry, Francine. I didn't hear you come in. " Amanda said, taking the file  
> Francine had in her hand. <br>"Don't worry, I wasn't expecting to see you, either.. Here is the file Lee wanted.  
> Where is he anyway?" Francine asked, looking around for him. <br>"He's being debriefed. What kind of file?" Amanda asked, taking the file from  
> Francine.<br>"He asked me to check on a Zachary Bauer. Why he is looking into a sixteen year old's  
> background, I have no idea. Tell Lee he owes me one for this. He knows the rules for<br>using government information for personal use. I'll talk to you later." Francine left the  
> room. Amanda opened the file and it said, Zach Bauer. Lee is having Zach checked out! <br>Oh my gosh! What is he doing? Just as she was closing the file, Lee walked in.

> Lee bent down and kissed Amanda on the cheek. "Hey, what ya got there?" Lee asked. <br> He noticed the upset look on Amanda's face and then he looked down at the file. He  
> grabbed the file, went to his desk, looking very guilty.<br> "Lee, what are you doing? I can't believe you're checking this boy out." Amanda said,  
> getting up from her desk.<br> "Francine wasn't supposed to show you that." Lee said, burying his face in the file.  
> "Lee, you can't look at that. You have got to trust Cassie. Let her live a little." <br> Amanda said.  
> "I trust Cassie, I just don't trust this Zach. See...Look at this. Shoplifting. That is<br> criminal offence." Amanda grabbed the folder, looked at it, smiled, and then gave it back  
> to him.<br> " He was eight years old. Lee, just stay out of it." Lee looked inside the folder,  
> scrutinizing the information. <br> "I can't just stay out of it. She's my baby." Lee said  
> "What about Harry?" Amanda asked.<br> "That's different."  
> "How is that different?" <br> "It just is."  
> Amanda grabbed the file from Lee. "It's different because Cassie is a girl. Don't deny<br> it."  
> "Okay, okay. So she's a girl. I can't just sit here while her life could be in danger. I<br> have to do something about it."  
> Amanda laughed. "She's going on a date! She's not getting mixed up with KGB<br> agents. Zach Bauer is not a terrorist, he is a high school student. There is nothing to  
> worry about .Please let it go. Don't make things uncomfortable for Cassie."<br> "How is protecting my daughter making things bad. We don't even know this boy.  
> What if...What if... No, I'm going to make sure Zach Bauer is clean."<br> "If Cassie finds out, you are going to regret this. And I won't help you either... I can't  
> believe you." Amanda smirked, walked over to Lee and kissed him. He grinned and she<br> went back to her desk shaking her head. He can be so amusing.  
> <br>  
> Lee was sitting in the office trying to concentrate on his case. It was quite boring,<br> really. It was almost wrapped up, just a lot of paper work. For some reason, he had a  
> difficult time concentrating on it. Visions of Cassie going out on a date seemed to haunt<br> him. Boys! He knew what boys were like. Not long ago, he was a boy himself. Visions  
> of growing up and the kinds of dates he had surfaced in his memory. If this young man<br> was anything like he had been,... well, Lee knew he couldn't let this happen. He couldn't  
> interfere but he had to do something. Then it hit him. Why hadn't he thought of it<br> before. He's a government agent. He's an expert on spying on people.  
> Lee picked up the phone. " Leatherneck. Scarecrow, here. Hey, listen. Can you come<br> up here? I want to get a surveillance package going....I need it Friday....well, it's for a  
> young lady....No, not the case we're working on, but for something else that has come<br> up...Great Leatherneck. I knew I could count on you....Hey, if Billy says anything, send  
> him up here, Okay? Great! Oh, one more thing. I wouldn't mention this to<br> Amanda...Yep. Mum's the word." Lee hung up the phone. He took a look at the papers  
> and, for some strange reason, managed to concentrate this time.<br>  
> <br> Friday night was here. Cassie was up in her room, making sure

everything was in it's

> place. Amanda walked in. Amanda watched her get ready, feeling very old. It didn't<br> seem that long ago when she was primping up little Cassie herself.

> "You look very nice. Um.. Your dad bought you this. He knew this was a special night<br> for you. He wanted you to have something special." Amanda said, as she gave Cassie a

> small box. Cassie opened the box, and pulled out a necklace.<br> "It's beautiful." Cassie said, giving it to her mother. Amanda turned her around and

> secured the clasp.<br> "I don't understand him sometimes He was against this from the start." Cassie said,

> admiring the necklace.<br> "Don't worry, sometimes I don't understand him myself. It's probably his way of

> apologizing. It's a very pretty necklace, though. I want you to have a great night, okay?" <br> Amanda squeezed her hand and smiled at her. Then she left the room.

> <br>

> Lee sat outside on the porch, busy cleaning his guns. Harry sat beside him, knowing<br> what was coming and not wanting to miss a minute of it. Lee had five guns, a 12 gage

> shot gun, a 30-06, a 9mm ruger, and two 38's. Lee started cleaning one, but wasn't<br> much into it until a young man pulled up to the curb. Then he rigorously started cleaning

> one at a time. <br> Zach slowly walked up to the door, not quite sure what was going on. Kenzy Lewis,

> Cassie's best friend, had warned him that Lee Stetson was a very protective father. That's<br> why he had waited so long before he finally asked Cassie out.

> Lee looked over Zach as he came to the porch. He looked very sharp. A little too<br> sharp, thought Lee.

> "Ah...I'm here to get Cassie." Zach said, standing on the lower step.<br> "You much be Zach Bauer. Have a seat. Cassie will be out in a few minutes." Lee said,

> looking down at his gun.<br> Zach sat down. He began to fidget with his jacket. He said hi to Harry, but Harry just

> grinned. Zach knew he was in trouble.<br> "So, tell me , Zach. Do you shoot?" Lee asked, looking up for a brief second.

> "Um, not really. My mom isn't crazy about guns." Zach said. <br> "That's too bad. It's a good sport. Harry here is a very good shot. Almost as good as

> me. But Cassie, she's the best. She can hit anything that moves. But I can still hit the<br> farthest distance. Maybe some day you'll see just how far I can shoot,... if you get my

> drift." Zach turned a bright shade of red. <br> Just then, the door opened and Cassie and Amanda came out. Cassie looked radiant.

> Lee stood up, and Zach followed. <br> "You look....great." Zach said, looking at Lee to make sure he didn't say anything

> wrong.<br> "Thanks. We'd better be going." Cassie said. Lee cleared his throat.

> "What movie are you going to see? What time will you be home? Do you have your<br> cell phone? Feel free to call us any time. Make sure she's back by midnight, no less. Do I

> make myself clear?" Lee asked. Zach answered the questions and he and Cassie quickly<br> left.

> "Did you see the look on his face! You really scared him Dad.

Cool!" Harry went<br> inside to catch the rest of his favorite TV show. Amanda sat down next to Lee, put her

> arm around his shoulder and cuddled up to him. "You did very well. Even the colonial<br> would be proud." Amanda grinned.

> "Hey, lay off, okay? I just want to make sure she is safe." Lee said, leaning into<br> Amanda.

> "I'm surprised you don't have someone tailing them." Amanda said.<br> "I tried, but it was personal so the Agency said no." Amanda smiled, but Lee didn't.

> That made Amanda smile even more. <br> "Well, I guess you're stuck with me tonight. Poor guy."

> "Oh, I'm not stuck." Lee said, as he pulled her legs on his lap. I'm never stuck with<br> you." He kissed her and they embraced, as Lee watched the direction the car was leaving.

> Then he waved his hand, just as another car took off.<br>

> <br> Later that evening, Lee was sitting in the study, adjusting his ear piece, so it couldn't

> be seen. The Agency had planted a listening device in the necklace that he had given to<br> Cassie. He wanted to make sure everything went as smoothly as possible. Amanda came

> in to the study to find Lee sitting at the desk. He was busy looking over some papers and<br> was startled when Amanda came in.

> "Sweetheart, what are you doing? You know, we made a deal that we weren't going to<br> spend any time in here on the weekends. Is there anything wrong?" Amanda asked,

> sitting on the edge of the desk. They had agreed when the computers were networked that<br> weekends were their time and no business at home..

> "I'm just checking on some paperwork that is due on Monday. Why don't you go<br> ahead and I'll be in a little while." Lee said, putting something into his pocket. Amanda

> could always tell when he is hiding something. She walked over to kiss him and saw a<br> wire hanging out of his ear. She reached into his jacket. Any other time he would have

> welcomed it but this time he grabbed her hand. But he was too late. She pulled the<br> listening device out.

> "What is this?" Amanda asked.<br> "I'm a...listening to the game." Lee stumbled out.

> "Oh, who's playing? " Amanda asked, noting his inability to look her in the eye.<br> "Virginia Tech and UCLA."

> "Ah, Sweetheart, that game is tomorrow. You're going with Jamie, remember?" She<br> grabbed the device and disconnected the ear plug. Amanda heard Cassie and Zach were

> busy buying popcorn.<br> "Your mom seems very nice. She's very pretty for her age." Lee smiled at Amanda as

> the two listened to the two.<br> "And you were right about your Dad. He was trippin' when I got there. Does he

> always clean his guns before your dates? The man is wacked out.! " Amanda smiled as<br> she turned it off

> "I don't believe you!...What is this?... Don't you think you have gone too far. What are<br> you, James Bond?...scratch that. " Amanda turned off the device. Lee grabbed it and

> turned it back on.<br> "Excuse me." Lee plugged the ear piece back in.

> "Oh my gosh! Would you look at yourself? Lee, this is our daughter. You are spying<br> on our daughter. Stop it. She will be fine. If things go bad, she will handle it. She is so

> much like you."<br> "That's what scares me the most. What do I know about normal courtship? What do I

> know about anything normal?"<br> "You are doing pretty good so far. Don't cut yourself short. Besides, to Cassie,

> everything you do is normal. Don't ruin the trust she has in you. You two have a great<br> relationship. You two remind me so much of

me and my father. Trust her, Lee. "

> Lee gave Amanda a hug, turned off the radio, and handed her the device.. She put it in<br> the drawer. "You always did get a little carried away."

> "Hey, it runs in the family." <br>

> <br> 11:54 PM. Lee is sitting watching the clock, wishing Amanda had never caught him in

> the Study with the listening device. Where could they be? He checked his cell phone to<br> make sure I was still working. 11:55. It had been an hour since Jamie checked in. During

> all of his stake outs and being stuck or trapped on Agency business had never been worse<br> than this night. How he had allowed Cassie to ever go out in the first place was beyond

> him. Well, it would never happen again. He couldn't go through this again.<br> Amanda came in with two cups and handed Lee one. He took a sip.

> "Hey, this is cocoa."<br> "Yes. The way you have been acting, I figured you were too young for coffee. Besides,

> you need to relax." Amanda said, kissing him on the cheek.<br> "I am relaxed. And I want coffee."

> "Sorry, kitchen's closed." Amanda said. <br> Carrie came bursting in to the room. She had a look of horror on her face. Lee paled.

> "What happened? What did he do? Where is he? I want to talk to him?" Lee barked,<br> going to the door.

> "The 'He 'you are referring to is right in front of me. I'm so angry! How could you,<br> Dad! Cleaning the guns was bad enough, but ...really..." She pulled the necklace down

> until it broke, threw it at her dad.<br> "Zach was admiring the necklace. His ring got caught and THIS fell out!" Cassie

> handed him a small battery shaped bug. "The company Zach's dad works for makes<br> these little things and he told me all about it. Ohhh! I hate you! And once this gets around

> at school, I'll never get another date. Oh, you'd love that, wouldn't you? I'm not your<br> little girl anymore. I'm sixteen Why don't you let me grow up? If you had your way, I

> would still be wearing pink bows and playing with Barbies. Thanks a lot, Dad! Just stay<br> out of my business!" Cassie screamed, and ran up the stairs.

> Amanda went over and put her arm on Lee. His face looked drained. He sat down on<br> the couch and put his head in his hands. Cassie had never told her father that she hated

> him. They have always had a very good relationship. <br> "Well, I guess you were right. I guess I went a little too far. What am I going to do

> now?" Lee asked<br> "Well, sweetheart, give her time. You know she didn't mean it. She needs time to cool

> off. Why don't you head to bed. I'll be right up." Amanda said.<br> "No, I think I'll take a walk. I need to think...clear my head. I love you." With that,

> Lee kissed his wife and headed out the door. Amanda took the cups to the kitchen sink,<br> and poured another one. She took it up the stairs and gave it to Cassie.

> Cassie was lying on her bed, crying. Amanda sat down, put her arm on her back, and<br> Cassie sat up and fell into her arms.

> "Oh, mom. I was so embarrassed. Zach will probably never ask me out again. I'm<br> probably the only girl in school who was bugged by her own father. Why does Dad have

> to be so pigheaded?" Cassie's tear streaked face .<br> "Try not to worry about that now, We'll deal with that in the morning. So, tell me how

> your date went? Did you have a good time?" Amanda asked, drying her tears. She would  
> save the heavy discussion until both Cassie and Lee had time to think.

> "Oh, mom. It was really nice. We saw a very dumb movie, though. Remind me to  
> take Harry sometime. He would love it. Then we took a walk at the Lincoln Memorial.

> Did you know that it is a very romantic place at night?" Cassie said, sitting up, taking a  
> sip of her cocoa.

> "Yea, I heard it was quite beautiful." Amanda smiled, memories of nights with Lee at  
> that very same spot flooding her mind.

> "We stopped for ice cream and then he brought me back here. And I saw Jamie at the  
> Ice cream Parlor. He was there with Renee...Did Dad put him up to that? Jamie isn't  
> spying for dad, is he? " Cassie demanded to know.  
> "I don't think Jamie would do it, but I'll find out." Amanda said

> "He didn't kiss me, if that's what you're worried about. I guess maybe the bug scared  
> him off He seemed very quiet on the way back from getting Ice cream. He will probably  
> never speak to me again."  
> "Well, you drink your cocoa and we will talk in the morning. Don't worry too much,  
> okay?. Tomorrow everything will seem more clear, I promise. I love you, Sweetheart ."  
> Amanda kissed her on the cheek and left the room.

> <br>

> Lee quietly walked in the room, trying not to wake Amanda. She sat up when he closed  
> the door. Lee turned around and noticed that she wasn't asleep at all. In fact, he could  
> tell she had something on her mind.]  
> "Hi. How was your walk?" Amanda asked, as Lee got undressed.

> "Terrible. Did you know most people water their grass at night?."   
> "Tell me you didn't do it?"

> "Do what?"   
> "Tell me you didn't enlist Jamie to help you out with your little scheme."

> 'Okay, I didn't"   
> "Is that the truth?"

> " I gave you the answer you wanted to hear, didn't I?"   
> "Is it the truth?" Amanda asked crossly.

> "Look, I mentioned it to him. How was I to know he was going to show up for Ice  
> cream. " Lee said, getting into bed.

> " How did you know he got ice cream?" Amanda asked. Lee looked at her for a few  
> seconds, knowing he was caught.

> "What else are you not telling me? Was Philip in on this too?"   
> "Well, Philip wanted to see that same movie. What did it matter if they went at the  
> same time. Philip and Tracey don't get out enough, you know that I was actually helping  
> them out.."

> "But you didn't know what movie they were seeing until Zach showed up."   
> "Oh, yea...Well...I...ah...forgot about that..." Lee stammered. Amanda stared at Lee.

> By the look she was giving him, Lee knew he was in trouble. Amanda's face became red  
> and she slipped out of bed, putting her robe on.

> "I don't believe you! First, you make a big deal about her even going out. Not to  
> mention the file you had on poor Zach. And then the scene you created with the guns Oh,  
> yea. Harry told me all about that one . I thought it was cute , at first. But then the  
> necklace. I just can't believe that one. And now you got Cassie's brothers spying on her!

> What, is the Agency not keeping you busy enough? What other surprises do you have up  
> your sleeve? All of this because you can't handle the fact that your daughter is growing



> up! What happens when she goes to college? Are you going to put in agents as her<br> teachers? Maybe Francine can be her room mate. Why not move into the room across

> form her's. That way you can bug her room and keep her under 24 hour surveillance!" <br> Amanda yelled.

> "Hey, now that's ridiculous. Francine's too young to go to college." Lee said, trying to<br> make light of the situation.

> "This is not funny. You are getting way out of control! Cassie is not one of your<br> suspects! She is your daughter! Someone, up til tonight, trusted you more than anyone

> else. " Amanda said, grabbing her pillow. "And to be quite honest, I'm not so sure about<br> you myself. Good night. I'll see you in the morning!" Amanda said, closing the bedroom

> door on her way out. Lee picked up his pillow, punched it two or three times. <br> " @\*&\$\$%&^%# " Lee said, burying his head under the pillow.

> <br>

> When Cassie came down for breakfast, she noticed a single pink rose on the kitchen<br> table. She turned around to see if anyone was there, and noticed her dad with another one

> in his hand.<br> "Hi, there. Um,...this is for you. " Lee said, giving her the rose. Cassie looked at it,

> trying to remind herself that she was furious with her father.<br> "Thanks."

> "Cassie, we need to talk. Come on, Let's go for a walk."<br> "What, is Jamie out in the bushes?" Cassie asked, sarcastically. Lee just looked at her,

> and then grabbed her hand.<br> "Come on." Cassie agreed and Lee and his daughter went outside. Amanda peeked

> around the corner and watched as the two of them as they walked out the door, with a<br> smile on her face. She knew things were going to be just fine.

> <br>

> <br> Lee had not slept well that night. Of course, after 17 years of sleeping with someone,

> it's kind of difficult to sleep alone. And he knew if he didn't get this situation cleared up,<br> tonight would be another LONG lonely night. Besides, this whole thing with Cassie was

> killing him. He hated the fact that he had blown things with Cassie. And there was<br> something to this hero worship of hers. But mostly, the thought that she actually hated

> him was tearing him up inside.<br> "Look, I know you probably hate me right about now. I know I got a little carried

> away." Lee said.<br> "A little, dad?" Cassie asked. Lee sighed and tilted his head to the side. "Okay, a lot

> carried away. I'm sorry. The last thing I wanted was for you to get hurt, I guess this is<br> how the whole thing started in the first place. I just love you so much that I'm not quite

> ready for you to grow up. You and Harry have given me something that I guess I've<br> always wanted deep inside. You've given me the chance to be involved in a normal

> childhood, one that I sorely missed growing up. I missed most of Philip and Jamie's. I<br> don't love them any less, I just want to keep a good thing going." Lee said, hoping he

> was making sense. <br> "Dad, time doesn't stand still. I am going to grow up. Harassing my dates isn't going to

> change that. " Cassie said<br> "Tell me about it. Okay, I promise I will back off....try to back off. Just trying to be

> honest. And if your mom gets any say, she'll keep me to my word." Lee said, looking<br> over at Cassie. Cassie smiled.

> "Well, I guess that's all I can hope for." Cassie gave Lee a hug  
"Now, what's with<br> you and mom? She slept in Jamie's room last  
night. What's up?"

> "Nothing a little flower can't fix.." Lee put his arm around his  
daughter and the two of<br> them started for home.

> <br>

> <br> Amanda walked into her room with a basket of laundry. The game  
would be starting

> soon and she had not talked to Lee all day. She felt guilty about  
how the night had gone,<br> and she really wanted to see him before  
he left with Jamie. Lying on the bed was one pink

> rose bud. She picked it up, smelled it. From behind, Lee puts his  
arms around her waist,<br> drawing her close. She dropped the basket.

> "Can you ever forgive an old fool?" Lee whispered in her ear.

Amanda smiled and<br> turned around. "If I knew an old fool, I  
might." She said. He nuzzled her neck.

> "I sure missed you last night It was awfully lonely without you.

And before you say it, I<br> know. I deserved it. And you'll be happy  
to know that Cassie and I had a little talk. I

> think things are going to be okay. " Lee said. <br> "They are, huh?"  
Amanda asked

> "You bet."<br> "That's right, because you are going to apologize to  
Zach as well." Amanda said.

> "What?... Amanda, I don't think....What good will it ...." Lee  
stammered. Amanda just<br> smiled at him and he laughed, resigned  
himself and kissed her. "Oh, the things I do for

> you, Mrs. Stetson!" Amanda laughed and they kissed again.<br>

> <br>

> It was Saturday night, and Cassie waited at the door for Zach.

Amanda and Cassie had<br> a plan in motion. Amanda had called and  
talked to Zach's mom and explained about what

> had happened the night before. Hopefully, tonight would go better  
than last night. <br> Amanda sat at the kitchen table with Lee,  
Philip, Jamie, and Harry. Cassie walked back

> to the kitchen table.<br> "Mom, I'm not sure if this is going to  
work?" Cassie looked a little nervous.

> "Cassie, Sweetheart. It'll be fine. I talked to his mother this  
afternoon. He will be here<br> any minute. Try to sit down." Amanda  
said, looking back at the men at the table.

> The bell rang and Cassie went to the door. Zach stood there, not  
sure what to expect.<br> "Hey, Cassie. My mom said you called and  
needed to talk to me. What's up?" Zach

> asked, looking around to see if Lee was there.<br> "Yea, come in. "  
Cassie closed the door and Zach followed here into the kitchen. He

> saw Lee and the other men sitting at the table. He took a step back  
and Amanda got up.<br> "Zach, please have a seat. There is something  
that we need to talk about." Amanda

> said. The color drained from Zach's face. "Don't worry, this isn't  
a set up. Go ahead and<br> have a seat."

> Zach sat at the table and Amanda glared at Lee. If anyone else were  
to be making him<br> do this, he would be out the door in a flash.  
But this was Amanda. How could one person

> have such a hold over him? Lee cleared his throat.<br> "Um,  
ah...Zach. I need to...ah... apologize....about last night. I ,  
ah...think we might

> have gotten off on the wrong foot..." He looked over at Amanda, who  
urged him to<br> continue.

> "Yea, and, ah...about that bug thing....Nothing personal. It's

just, she's my only<br> daughter..and , well,... you know,... I'm sorry." He looked over at Amanda. She smiled

> and he looked back at Zach.<br> Amanda cleared her throat and looked at Jamie.

> "And I'm sorry about the ice cream parlor. I was following you " Jamie said. Amanda<br> looked at Philip.

> "And I'm sorry for the movie theater, too." Philip said.<br> "What about the movie theater?" Cassie asked.

> "We'll talk about that later, Sweetheart." Amanda said. Cassie and Zach looked at each<br> other

> "See what I live with?" Cassie asked, Zach. "I know you would probably like to crawl<br> under a rock by now, I know I would, but if you'd like to try it again tonight, I'm

> game....Your mom DID say you had no plans. And I promise to leave the family at home<br> this time."

> "Yea, I'll keep them busy." Amanda said, looking over the table filled with a bunch of<br> cheap labor.

> "Well, I guess it wouldn't hurt." Zach said. <br> "Great! I'll go get my jacket." Cassie ran in the other room. Zach got up and walked

> over to Amanda.<br> "Thanks." Zach said.

> "No problem. You two have fun. " Zach and Cassie left. Amanda turned around.<br> "Okay, guys. What am I going to do with all of you? "

> "Well, Stacey is expecting me home soon". Philip said.<br> "And Dad wanted me to stop by this weekend to go over expenses." Jamie said, getting

> up.<br> "Hold it! No one goes anywhere! I've talked to Stacey and your Dad and they say you

> are mine for the rest of the evening. Now, Cassie and I have talked. She wants her room<br> painted a pale yellow. The paint and brushes are in her room waiting for you. If you start

> now, you should have it done before she gets home. Get busy." Amanda ordered.<br> "But mom, I didn't do anything!" Harry said.

Amanda thought about that. He didn't

> do anything. "You're right. Your Grandma has invited you over for the night. Go get<br> packed."

> Philip and Jamie grudgingly got up and headed upstairs. Lee got up and walked over to<br> Amanda.

> "I don't suppose I could get out of this, could I?" Lee asked, flashing one of those<br> famous smiles.

> "Oh, no, Stetson. In fact, when you're done, I get you." Amanda said, pointing<br> upstairs.

> "Now that sounds promising." <br> "Not if you don't get busy, it won't be. By the way, " Amanda came over and put her

> arms in Lee's shirt to make sure there were no listening devices.

"I just wanted to make<br> sure it didn't happen again." She started to back up but Lee grabbed her hands.

> "You can do that any time." And he kissed her hands. <br> "Oh no you don't, Stetson. Not til Cassie's room is a pale yellow!" Amanda said,

> pushing Lee up the stairs. Oh, her family of spies!<br>

End  
file.